DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 189 217 UD 020 697

AUTHOR Bowles, B. Dean
TITLE School-Community Relations, Community Support, and Student Achievement: A Summary of Findings.
NOTE 12p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Abstracts: *Academic Achievement: *Community Support: *Educational Research: Elementary Secondary Education: *School Community Relationship

ABSTRACT

Summaries of four studies on school community relations, student achievement and community support are provided in this report. The studies abstracted are: (1) "School-Community Relations, Student Achievement, and Conflict Resolution," by John E. Ingram, Jr.: (2) "School-Community Relations and Student Achievement in Communities of Differing Socio-Economic Character," by Hillel I. Raskas: (3) "School-Community Relations in Elementary and Secondary Schools," by Charlotte Cinonen: and (4) "Some Conclusions, Observations and Alternative Models for School-Community Relations," by B. Dean Bowles. Each summary provides information on the purpose of the study, research methodology, and study findings. (MK)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

MAY 3 0 1980

SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS, COMMUNITY SUPPORT, AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT:

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
B. Dean Bowles
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

by

B. Dean Bowles
University of Wisconsin-Madison

ED189217

"School-Community Relations, Student Achievement, and Conflict Resolution," by John E. Ingram, Jr., St. Louis Public Schools (TR #463)

The major purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between school-community relations and student achievement. Student achievement was measured by ITBS scores and letter grades in mathematics and reading/language arts. Communication, involvement, participation, resolution, access, and effective school-community relations were measured on 5-point Likert scales of respondent perception. Student achievement and effective school-community relations functioned as dependent variables; communication, involvement, participation, resolution, and access functioned as independent variables. The data were obtained through open-ended and focused interviews of 64 parents of students in grades four to six at an inner-city, urban school serving over 600 Black students. The principal research questions were

1. What is the relationship between the five variables of communication, involvement, participation, resolution, and access and the dependent variable of student achievement?

2. What is the relationship between the five variables of communication, involvement, participation, resolution, and access and the dependent variable of effective school-community relations?

The statistical techniques of Pearson Product Moment correlation, stepwise multiple regression analysis, and path analysis were used in the study. A case study was also written about school-community relations at the school.

The case study revealed that the school carried on a variety of school-community relations activities which involved a wide range of the school's sub-publics. The telephone was the most frequently used method of communication. Involvement was shown by the large number of parents who volunteered their time and made money donations to aid the school. Three parent advisory committees served as the chief vehicles of participation although few significant contributions were made by

UD020697

parents. Resolution concerns focused on the individual problems of peer-student-teacher-parent-school relationships and not on general school policy and practice. Accessibility was generally gained through the principal although parents seldom utilized this perceived entree to the school.

The findings revealed that the variable of communication explained 49 percent of the variance of effective school-community relations. The remaining variables accounted for virtually none of the remaining variance. There appeared to be little relationship between effective school-community relations and student achievement.

It also appeared that the variable of resolution explained anywhere from 8 percent to 18 percent of the variance of student achievement gathered from grades and ITBS scores. With the exception of communication, the other variables accounted for virtually none of the remaining four variables on the student achievement measures.

The variables of involvement and participation accounted for virtually none of the variance of either effective school-community relations or student achievement. This finding suggests that the conventional wisdom that involvement and participation contribute to effective school-community relations and/or achievement is suspect. However, the case study data would suggest that while involvement and participation accounted for none of the variance, involvement and participation activities served as legitimating vehicles for the presence of parents in the school.

* * * * * * *

"School-Community Relations and Student Achievement in Communities of Differing Socio-Economic Character," by Hillel I. Raskas, National School Boards Association (TR #525)

The major purpose of this study was to explore the relationships between school-community relations, community support for schools, and student achievement in two schools of different socio-economic character. Student achievement, effective school-community relations, communication, involvement, participation, resolution, and access were measured and functioned in the same manner as in the Ingram study. The community support variable was defined in terms of two corollary concepts: (a) economic - "Would you vote for a referendun which would benefit the school?" and (b) political-social legitimacy - "Do you have trust, confidence, and do you rely upon and accept the decisions of those in authority at _____ school?" One school was in a rural, moderately low income community, and the other school was located in a relatively high income, suburban community. The two schools also showed statistically significant differences of means on 12 of the 15 variables used in the study (e.g. communication, reading grades). The data were obtained through open-ended and focused interviews of

approximately 60 parents in each school. A critical incident study of the concept of resolution was also undertaken. The principal research questions were

1. What is the relationship between the five variables of communication, involvement, participation, resolution, and access and the dependent variable of student achievement?

2. What is the relationship between the five variables of communication, involvement, participation, resolution, and access and the dependent variable of effective school-community relations?

3. What is the relationship between the five variables of communication, involvement, participation, resolution, and access and the dependent variable of support?

4. What is the relationship between the five variables of communication, involvement, participation, resolution, and access and the dependent variable of legitimacy?

Each of these questions was answered in terms of schools in communities of different socio-economic character. Pearson Product Moment correlation, step-wise multiple regression analysis, and path analysis, along with a case study of each school, were again used as techniques of data analysis.

The case study and critical incident study of resolution indicated that resolution activity and behavior consisted principally of problems and concerns of an individual as opposed to a general policy or practice nature. Again, the kind of resolution universally illustrated at both schools was of the family-child-teacher-school-peer problem type.

The findings revealed that the variable of communication explained 41 percent of the variance of effective school-community relations in the school in the lower socio-economic community, and involvement accounted for 19 percent of the variance in the higher socio-economic community. There appeared to be little relationship between effective school-community relations and student achievement (and the low correlations were not statistically significant). There was a moderately high correlation between effective school-community relations and legitimacy at both school sites. Finally, there was little or no correlation between effective school-community relations and support (referendum vote).

It also appeared that the variable of resolution explained from 6 percent to 10 percent of the variance of student achievement in the lower socio-economic community. The findings were inconclusive at the school in the higher socio-economic community. The other variables accounted for virtually none of the remaining variance. At the lower socio-economic school path analysis confirmed the tentative conclusion that resolution functioned as an intervening variable which mediated the effects of the remaining four variables on the student achievement measures. Little or no relationship between either legitimacy or support (referendum vote) and student achievement was discovered.

The variable of involvement explained 9 percent of the variance of support (referendum vote) in the lower socio-economic community and 17 percent of the variance in the higher socio-economic community. The variable of communication explained 28 percent of the variance of legitimacy in the lower socio-economic community; however, involvement explained 12 percent of the variance in the higher socio-economic community.

The variable of involvement tended to function differently in the higher socio-economic community than in the lower socio-economic community. For example, in the higher socio-economic community involvement tended to be the most critical variable in explaining the variance of effective school-community relations, legitimacy, and support, and even though it was not statistically significant, involvement was the most important variable explaining the variance of student achievement. However, except for explaining the variance of support, the concept of involvement was not a principal, functioning variable in the lower socio-economic school and community. Again, the variable of participation accounted for virtually none of the variance of effective school-community relations, student achievement, support, or legitimacy.

* * * * * *

"School-Community Relations and Student Achievement in Elementary and Secondary Schools," by Charlotte Oinonen, University of Wisconsin-Madison (TR forthcoming)

This was the third study in the series. The major purpose of this study was to explore the relationships between school-community relations, community support for schools, and student achievement in elementary and secondary schools. The several variables functioned in exactly the same manner as in the Raskas study, and the same principal research questions were addressed. The difference was in the fact that this study compared the responses of 40 fifth grade students and their parents with 40 eleventh grade students and their parents; in total there were 160 parent and student interviews in addition to those associated with the case study. The community in which the study was

conducted can be characterized as a middle-class, non-suburban community. The same statistical techniques were employed in this study as in the previous ones.

Again, the case study and critical incident study of resolution indicated that resolution activity and behavior consisted principally of family-child-teacher-school-peer problems and not major policy or practice issues.

The findings revealed that the variable of communication explained 55 percent of the variance of effective school-community relations for parents of elementary school students and 52 percent of the variance for parents of secondary school students. However, among elementary students resolution was the critical variable accounting for 14 percent of the variance, and among secondary students involvement was the critical variable accounting for 33 percent of the variance. When the data was aggregated, communication accounted for 38 percent of the variance. There appeared to be little relationship between effective school-community relations and student achievement. There was a moderately high relationship between effective school-community relations and legitimacy. Finally, there was little relationship between effective school-community relations and support (referendum vote).

It also appeared that the variables which explained the amount of variance of student achievement were mixed and relatively inconclusive: (a) participation accounted for 8 percent of the variance among elementary parents; (b) resolution accounted for 11 percent of the variance among elementary students; (c) access accounted for 14 percent of the variance among secondary parents; and (d) the findings were inconclusive among secondary students. The aggregated data showed that access was the principal variable by accounting for 6 percent of the variance. However, this study showed a relatively high relationship between access and resolution, with resolution explaining as much as 52 percent of the variance of access. Path analysis did not confirm the tentative conclusion that resoluton (or access) functioned as an intervening variable which mediated the effects of the remaining four variables on the student achievement measures. There was little or no relationship between either legitimacy or support (referendum vote) and student achievement.

Again, the relationships of the independent variables to support were mixed and inconclusive. The only statistically significant findings were among the parent respondents: (a) resolution explained 19 percent of the variance of support among elementary parent respondents and (b) communication explained 21 percent of the variance among secondary parent respondents. The aggregated data indicated that communication accounted for 8 percent of the variance of support. With respect to the dependent variable of legitmacy, all the results were statistically significant. However, the data showed that communication explained

25 percent of the variance of legitimacy among elementary parent respondents and 42 percent of the variance among secondary parent respondents. Access was a strong determining factor for elementary student respondents, accounting for 23 percent of the variance. Resolution accounted for 31 percent of the variance among secondary students.

The variables of involvement and participation showed relatively little or no correlation. Therefore, it can be concluded that they are relatively independent variables and operationally distinct concepts (Involvement was defined and operationalized in this study as a contribution of time, energy and talent; participation was defined in terms of problem-solving and decision-making.). Involvement appeared to be a more critical variable among secondary student respondents than among any other group. However, the operational definition of involvement which emanates from the data (open-ended interviews) is different from that of other respondents. To all other groups involvement meant the contribution of time, energy, and talent, but to the secondary students the "contribution of their time, energy, and talent" was through school activities, athletics, and the extra-curricular program. Hence, while the behavior may be the same, the relationship between the contributor and those who benefit was different. Finally, the variables of involvement (with the exception of the secondary students) and participation accounted for virtually none of the variance of either effective school-community relations, achievement, support, or legitimacy.

Among other findings, it can be said that the manner in which parents view the school (effective school-community relations, support, or legitimacy) is largely a function of communication. Also, the school-community relations variables most influencing parental behavior are different from the variables influencing student behavior. Finally, the absence of any consistent pattern among the elementary student responses, or of a consistent relationship with previous studies, may be accounted for by methodological problems in interviewing fifth grade students.

* * * * * *

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Question	City School	Low SES School	High SES School	Elem Parents	Elem Students	Secdry Parents	Secdry Students
Effective School-Community Relations	C - 49%	C - 44%	I - 19%	C - 55%	R - 14%	C - 52%	I - 33%
Effective School-Community Relations and Student Achievement	Low r	No r	Low r	No r	No r	Low r	Moderate Low r
Student Achievement	R - 13%	R - 8%	Inconclusive	Inconclusive	R - 11%	A - 14%	Inconclusive
Effective School-Community Relations and Support	------	No r	Low r	Moderate Low r	Low r	Moderate High r	Moderate Low r
Effective School-Community Relations and Legitimacy	------	Moderate High r	Moderate High r	Moderate High r	Moderate Low r	High r	Moderate High r
Student Achievement and Support	------	No r	Low r	No r	No r	Moderate Low r	Low r
Student Achievement and Legitimacy	------	No r	No r	No r	Low r	Moderate Low r	Low r
Support	------	I - 9%	I - 17%	R - 19%	Inconclusive	C - 21%	Inconclusive
Legitimacy	------	C - 28%	I - 12%	C - 25%	A - 23%	C - 42%	R - 31%
Independence of Involvement and Participation	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Function of Participation	None	None	None	None	None	None	None
Macro vs. Micro Resolution	Micro	Micro	Micro	Micro	Micro	Micro	Micro

A = Access, I = Involvement, P = Participation, R = Resolution, C = Communication, % = % of Variance
r = Pearson Product Moment Correlation,

"Some Conclusions, Observations, and Alternative Models for School-Community Relations," by B. Dean Bowles, University of Wisconsin-Madison

The research described here was primarily exploratory. The data were drawn from five different schools in four different socio-economic communities. Except for the achievement data, all data were collected in about 350 1-hour open-ended, focused interviews. The analysis was done through correlation, multiple regression analysis, and path analysis in addition to conceptual refinement which grew out of the case and critical incident studies.

The overall findings can be summarized as follows:

1. Communication is the critical variable which relates most closely with effective school-community relations programs.

2. There is little or not relationship between effective school-community relations programs and student achievement.

3. There is little or no relationship between effective school-community relations programs and the expectation of public support (on referendum votes).

4. There is a moderately high relationship between effective school-community relations programs and a sense of institutional legitimacy for schools.

5. The findings regarding the variables which relate to student achievement are mixed and inconclusive. However, the variable which relates most closely with student achievement is the variable of resolution. While resolution accounted for less than 15 percent of the variance, it was a significant variable and frequently functioned as an intervening variable.

6. There is little or not relationship between the expectation of public support (on referendum votes) and student achievement.

7. There is little or no relationship between a sense of institutional legitimacy and student achievement.

8. The findings regarding the variables which relate to the expectation of public support (for referendum votes) are mixed and inconclusive.

9. The findings regarding the variables which relate to a sense of institutional legitimacy for schools are somewhat mixed. However, the variable which relates most closely is communication.

10. The variables of involvement and participation are relatively independent except in the case of the inner-city school. Moreover, the operational definitions of these concepts are verified by these research efforts.

11. The variable of participation does not function as a critical variable -- moreover it rarely emerged as a factor for consideration -- in any of the correlated relationships or regression analyses.

12. The operational definition of resolution is refined to reflect the findings that all instances of resolution are micro cases (family-child-school-teacher-peer problems) and not macro cases (general policy and practice issues).

13. Access correlates highly with resolution and, therefore, they functioned as inter-dependent variables.

14. The lower the socio-economic character of a community and the higher the level of politicization, then the greater is the function of resolution in student achievement. The higher the socio-economic character of a community and the lower the level of politicization, then the greater is the function of involvement in all aspects of school-community relations

15. The operational definition of involvement for secondary students is different from that of all other respondent groups.

The principal conclusions which emanate from this research are as follows:

1. While the several variables of school-community relations programs have virtually no impact on student achievement, if there is a single variable which does relate, it is the process of resolution. Moreover, the other school-community relations process variables will have more impact on student achievement if they function through (and therefore culminate in) resolution.

2. Operationally there are at least three -- and perhaps four -- models for school-community relations programs.

   (a) If the desired outcome is public perception that a school has an effective program of school-community relations, then the school should communicate frequently and effectively.

   (b) If the desired outcome is increased student achievement, then the school should culminate its school-community relations activities in resolution and develop the problem-solving and conflict resolution skills of <u>all</u> its personnel.

   (c) If the desired outcome is a sense of institutional legitimacy by adults in the community, then frequent and effective communication should be the primary process effort.

   (d) If the desired outcome is change of macro public policy or practices (hypothetical), then participation should be the primary process effort.

3. School-community relations needs to be decentralized to school sites if they are to have an impact on achievement, effective school-community relations, and legitimacy.

4. Problem-solving and conflict resolution skills need to be developed and utilized by <u>all</u> school personnel at the local school site if they are to have an impact on achievement.

5. There appears to be no relationship between any specific involvement or participation activity (e.g. volunteers, advisory committees) and student achievement, support or effective school-community relations.

These studies were done as part of a program of funded research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Research and Development Center for Individualized Schooling. The Wisconsin Research and Development Center is supported primarily by the National Institute of Education.